

Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of September 9, 2008

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Voting Members Present

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing New England Development
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Gregory Knoop	Oudens + Knoop Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr	Somerset House Management Association
David Viertels	EagleBank (Employer of fewer than 50)

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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Absent

Jessica Moore	The JBG Companies
William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

Guests

Fred Delacruz	Saks Fifth Avenue
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
Jennifer Renkema	Council Office of Legislative Oversight
Jeffrey Slavin	for William Farley, Town of Somerset

Items 1,2,3 – Introductions, Review Approval of June and July minutes, Chair’s Comments. Members and guests introduced themselves. There was no quorum in the July meeting, therefore **Robert Schwarzbart** asked the group to review the June and the July minutes. The minutes from both meetings were approved without changes.

Mr. Schwarzbart introduced and welcomed four new members to the committee:

- **April Birnbaum, New England Development**
- **William Farley, Somerset Town Council**
- **Bill McCloskey, Citizens Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights**

- **David Viertels, EagleBank**

Mr. Schwarzbart said that on the evening of September 8th the Friendship Heights Village Council held a vote to award a contract to repave all streets and sidewalks in Friendship Heights Village. The work will begin in October and be completed around December. All work will be done between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm.

Contractors will do what they can to keep all streets open and traffic flowing smoothly. The current plan is to complete all the work before the beginning of winter. One of the reasons the Village Council picked this particular contractor was because of their sensitivity to the community's needs.

Item 5 – Nomination and election of Vice Chair. **Mr. Schwarzbart** reminded the Committee that **Leslie Olson** was nominated at the July meeting to serve as Vice Chair. There was no quorum at the July meeting, so the vote was delayed. **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked for additional nominations – none were offered. **Ms. Olson** was elected Vice Chair by unanimous vote.

Item 4 – Introduction: Office of Legislative Oversight. **Jennifer Renkema**, OLO Research Associate, stated that the Office of Legislative Oversight is a special office of the County Council, and every year the Council puts together a work program for a wide range of topics for the Office to look at. This year, there are about 11 or 12 topics on the work program. One of the reports that they have been tasked to put together for the Council this year deals with transportation management issues. The Council has specifically asked for comprehensive information regarding:

- Transportation Management Districts (TMDs)
- Parking Policy
- Development Policy
- Examining the governing structure

Other topics related to TMD management:

- Which agency is in charge of specific pieces of transportation management?
- How are transportation issues funded?
- What are other jurisdictions doing in the area of transportation demand management?

The Office of Legislative Oversight is meeting with several different offices, including Commuter Services and all of the TMD Advisory Committees to get a sense of some of the issues the committees deal with, and also to report on these efforts to the Council. **Ms. Renkema** passed around her contact information to the Committee and invited feedback from the members and guests.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked what the Office of Legislative Oversight would be looking at that the Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee would be interested in. **Ms. Renkema** responded that at present OLO would basically be looking at the general work of the Advisory Committee, how the Committee interacts with the community at large, and what impacts the Advisory Committee has had on transportation issues.

Leslie Olson mentioned that there are large differences in funding between the Friendship Heights Advisory Committee and other TMD Advisory Committees, since there is no revenue from parking garages in Friendship Heights. This has an impact on some things the Committee would have like to have done, such as operating the transit store and hiring additional personnel dedicated to TMD marketing and operations. She asked if there was a common need among all the TMDs if that could be met by an already existing funding source within the County. **Ms. Renkema** answered that it may be possible at some point, but currently parking lot district (PLD) funding is a dedicated source and remains in the PLD to fund transportation.

Greg Knoop asked why funding is linked so closely to locale. Transportation is a countywide network, yet funding is localized. Real transportation is systemic, and every TMD has roads, subways, buses, infrastructure, etc. Since it is systemic, shouldn't the funding be centralized and shared? **Mr. Knoop** followed up by saying that half his employees come from Shady Grove to Friendship Heights via the Metro. The public garages are built in certain areas and were put there for the County's good, not for Bethesda's good, for example; and yet only Bethesda benefits from the garages in Bethesda. **Mr. Knoop** believes that we should look at how overall funding is allocated. **Ms. Renkema** said that this is one question that her office will be examining.

Ms. Renkema discussed the multiple ways in which parking garages generate revenue, including taxes and fees, and parking fines. **Mr. Schwarzbart** mentioned that part of the reason that Friendship Heights does not have a public garage is because of development patterns. Since most of the development in Friendship Heights is concentrated, there simply is not sufficient room for a County parking facility.

Mr. Knoop stated that the locations of the parking garages can serve to thin traffic as you get closer to the DC border, and that many of the garages that do exist were strategically placed. **Mr. Knoop** says this supports the view that area's transportation system should be viewed in systemic terms.

Mr. Knoop said that he is very interested in seeing more investment made in buses. It is the one transportation subsystem that has a complete stronghold into all the neighborhoods within the County. Metro, on the other hand, is quite limited in its reach and growth is slower.

Mr. Schwarzbart added that one of the accomplishments of Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee was saving the Friendship Heights Bus Terminal, which WMATA initially indicated was going to be closed.

Item 6 – Western and River Road Covered Bus Stop. **Bill McCloskey** stated that WMATA is currently replacing bus shelters along Western Avenue. This would be a good opportunity for them to remove the shelter at Western and River Road, and to move it back to the park area. Currently, there is two feet of sidewalk between the shelter and the curb, which is insufficient for a wheelchair or scooter to pass by.

Mr. McCloskey is hoping that the Committee and Commuter Services could assist in contacting WMATA to ensure that it stays on their radar. **Jim Carlson** stated that it may be out of the TMD's jurisdiction if it is at River Road, but that we can still pursue it since it does affect the TMD. Motion for **Mr. Carlson** to call WMATA and, if necessary, follow up with a letter was carried.

Item 7 – TMD Attendance. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that at the last meeting, the Committee did not have a quorum. As a result, two issues were tabled. **Mr. Schwarzbart** recognizes that the July meeting comes at the height of summer, when many families enjoy a vacation, but there have been a number of meetings throughout the year in which there was no quorum for crucial votes. There are a few voting members who have been repeatedly absent. **Mr. Schwarzbart** reminded the group that the County has an official attendance policy for TMD Advisory Committees that must be followed.

Mr. Carlson pointed out the County's attendance guidelines (included in the meeting packet). For committees that meet monthly, there are 3 allowed absences in one year, but three consecutive absences is grounds for removal from the Committee. This is not only an issue here, nor an issue among the TMDs, but among Advisory Committees throughout the County. Previous absences will not be grounds from removal, but moving forward the County must enforce the attendance policy. This will ensure that meetings are productive and TMD business can be properly transacted.

Mr. Schwarzbart noted that without the proper number of people the Committee is less representative, work is impeded and issues are tabled for lack of a quorum. It further burdens the staff since they must recall all items that were not voted on in the previous meeting.

Item 8 – Other Business. **Sandra Brecher** announced the Commuter Services’ recent move. Both the administrative offices and the TRiPS Commuter Store have moved to their new locations. The main number for the office is (240) 777-8380, and the main number for the store is (240) 773-TRIP (8747).

Commuter Services moved just before the groundbreaking of the new Silver Spring Transit Center, which will serve as the “Grand Central Station” of Montgomery County. The Transit Center will house all forms of transportation, including Metrobus, Ride On, MTA, Greyhound, UM and other shuttles, MARC Rail, Metrorail, taxis, Van Go, etc. Ms. Brecher said she was not sure if the Vamoose bus will also be there (Vamoose is the bus service between New York City and Washington DC).

Ms. Brecher discussed what Commuter Services does related to promoting Transportation Demand Management (TDM):

- Parking Management
- Parking Parity
- Car Sharing
- Biking and Bike Sharing
- Real Time Information

These efforts are mainly focused on peak periods, and mainly to the business community.

Most efforts are concentrated within the County’s four active TMDs (Bethesda, North Bethesda, Silver Spring and Friendship Heights), although any resident or business in the County may utilize Commuter Services programs. TMD Funding comes from developer Parking Reduction Fees, PLDs, and TMD Fees, which come from new developments. To help reduce congestion, the County Code calls for the Commuter Services Office to work with employers to develop Traffic Mitigation Plans (TMPs). Employers must actively implement eight required plan elements:

1. Designate a point of contact within the company to distribute information.
2. Post and distribute information on transit/pooling and other commuting alternatives.
3. Facilitate staff presentations to employees on a periodic basis.
4. Provide Guaranteed Ride Home information to employees.
5. Participate in the County’s Annual Commuter Survey, with a good faith effort to achieve an 80% return rate.
6. Provide ADA information to employees.
7. Establish a permanent display area for TMD-provided transit information.
8. Compile information on the company’s TMP activities and submit an annual report.

Ms. Brecher discussed commuting benefits for employers and employees, including transit subsidies on Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride On, and MARC. The Super FareShare program is available to all employers located in the TMDs. The maximum employee benefit is \$115 per month, up to whatever the employee’s commuting cost is. For the first year, the employer pays only \$1 per month per employee and the County provides the rest, up to the Federal tax-free maximum of \$114. Super FareShare is a nine year program, with graduated matching subsidy amounts after the first year (Yr 2-5 = 50%; Yr 6 = 40%; Yr 7 = 30%; Yr 8 = 20%; Yr 9 = 10%).

Employers not in one of the TMDs are eligible for the County’s standard 3-year FareShare program, which provides a graduated matching subsidy of 50-percent, 40-percent and 30percent over the life of the program.

Developers doing business in the County must submit Traffic Mitigation Agreements (TMAG). These are negotiated with developers after Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) approves the Preliminary Plan. All TMAGs require a specific point of contact on site, facilitated access to

tenants for information about services in the TMD, and use of space by prior arrangement for Commuter Information Days (CIDs) and other commuter-related events. Similar to employers, developers must designate a permanent information display showing various commuting options, must participate in the annual Commuter Survey, and must submit an annual report.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if **Ms. Brecher** wanted to set aside a block of time to continue with this and follow through with a question and answer session. **Ms. Brecher** agreed to set aside a future meeting date to continue the discussion.

Mr. Carlson noted that the taxicabs have officially moved back to Wisconsin Circle. Nonetheless, there occasionally are taxis standing on Willard Avenue. **Mr. Schwarzbart** would like more citations given and better enforcement of the rules. **Mr. Carlson** reminded the group that while there two taxi Compliance Officers that patrol the area, there is not enough staff on hand to respond to citizen complaints of a taxi parked in the wrong place. However, as the officers pass by there, they will ticket taxis which are parked outside the designated taxi stand area. **Mr. Schwarzbart** would like to see the call button removed, since at the moment it is serving no functional purpose, yet pedestrians are pressing it in the hopes of calling a cab.

Mr. Knoop said that he has used the button as a customer himself, and it simply did not work. He had to walk down to the Willard stand when it was operating. He did suggest a direct intercom system to the dispatchers. As it is now, the customers have no knowledge that any cabs will come.

Ms. Olsen said that there is a design issue on Wisconsin Circle. Part of it the Circle has now been altered to allow for standing cabs, which is not in conformity with the Site Plan.

Mr. Knoop said that there is an issue specific to his building (2 Wisconsin Circle), where there is not an adequate drop off area. **Mr. Knoop** suggested that at a future meeting, some of these issues mandated in the Master Plan and Site Plan should be revisited.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15

Next meeting date: October 14, 2008